

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7451

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP

SUBJECT: FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT COMMENTS ON
INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. DURING MY CALL MORNING SEPTEMBER 29 ON FIRST VICE
PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT, LT. GENERAL GUTIERREZ MELLADO,
ON ANOTHER MATTER (SEPTTEL), HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO
TAKE THE OCCASION OF MY VISIT TO EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD DO WHATEVER IT COULD
TO LEND MORAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT TO THE EFFORTS OF
THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO LEAD SPAIN TOWARD DEMOCRACY.
HE BELIEVED THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WAS ON THE
RIGHT TRACK AND THAT IT WAS BEING WELL LED BY A
DYNAMIC AND DECISIVE YOUNG PRIME MINISTER. GUTIERREZ
MELLADO SAID THAT HE HAD REALLY NOT KNOWN SUAREZ VERY
WELL BEFORE BEING ASKED TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT
HE WAS IMPRESSED BY WHAT HE HAD SEEN. HE (GUTIERREZ
MELLADO) PERSONALLY HAD BEEN HAPPY AS ARMY CHIEF OF
STAFF AND WAS NOT ALTHOGETHER COMFORTABLE IN HIS NEW
POLITICAL ROLE. HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED IN REFORM AND HE
WAS PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER HE COULD TO HELP THAT
REFORM REACH REALIZATION. HE PERSONALLY WAS OPTIMISTIC.

2. IN ALL OF THIS, IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE
UNITED STATES ADOPT AS SUPPORTIVE A POSITION AS IT
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COULD EVEN IF THIS MEANT A LITTLE EXTRA EFFORT ON OUR

PART. HE WAS NOT TALKING SO MUCH ABOUT THE MILITARY SIDE, AS HE FELT THE TREATY PROVIDED A FRAMEWORK FOR THIS. HOWEVER, IN OTHER AREAS, PARTICULARLY THE ECONOMIC, AN UNDERSTANDING BY PUBLIC OPINION THAT WE ARE MAKING AN EXTRA EFFORT TO HELP WOULD GO FAR TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS PRESENT EFFORTS.

3. I TOLD GUTIERREZ MELLADO THAT AS HE KNEW, WE HAD EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM OF DEMOCRATIC REFORM AND THAT WE CONTINUED TO DO SO. WE HAD BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO PUT ANY PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT OR TO INTERFERE IN ANY WAY, BUT RATHER TO MAKE CLEAR OUR OPTIMISM AND OUR MORAL SUPPORT FOR THE DIFFICULT TASK WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN IN MOVING SPAIN FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY. I POINTED OUT THAT UNDER OUR SYSTEM AND OUR LAWS, THERE WERE CERTAIN VERY CLEAR LIMITATIONS ON WHAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO, BUT I COULD ASSURE HIM THAT WITHIN THOSE LIMITATIONS THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTS THE DEMOCRATIC REFORM PROGRAM.

4. I THEN ASKED GUTIERREZ MELLADO IF HE COULD TELL ME WHAT THE SITUATION NOW WAS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES AS A RESULT OF HIS DESIGNATION.

5. GUTIERREZ MELLADO REPLIED THAT HE COULD ASSURE ME THAT THE REPORTS ABOUT POSSIBLE RESIGNATIONS BY THE OTHER MILITARY MINISTERS WERE WITHOUT FOUNDATION. HE HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE THREE SERVICE MINISTERS, ALL OF WHOM HE KNEW WELL, AND THEY SUPPORTED HIS APPOINTMENT. THERE WERE A FEW WELL-KNOWN EXTREME RIGHTISTS AMONGST THE MILITARY WHO DID NOT LIKE HIM AND WHO RESENTED HIS APPOINTMENT, BUT THEY WERE IN THE MINORITY. HE FELT THAT WITHIN THE ARMY AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING THE MORE PROGRESSIVE OFFICER ELEMENTS, HIS APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN WELCOME. HE COMMENTED THAT IN A RECENT ORDER OF THE DAY THAT HE HAD ADDRESSED TO THE ARMY WHEN HE WAS STILL CHIEF OF STAFF, HE HAD OUTLINED HIS THINKING ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE ARMY AND THIS HAD BEEN USEFUL IN TERMS OF THE POSITION HE

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NOW HOLDS. ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN CHARACTERIZED AS A "LIBERAL" IT WAS NOT CLEAR TO HIM WHAT THIS REALLY MEANT ALTHOUGH SOME OF HIS OPPONENTS IN THE ARMED FORCES GAVE IT A RADICAL TWIST WHICH WAS TOTALLY DISTORTED. WITH REGARD TO THE CIVILIAN ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, HE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS ON THE WHOLE A COHESIVE GOVERNMENT WORKING WELL TOGETHER UNDER A DECISIVE LEADER. IT WAS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE

PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT WHICH LACKED THAT IMPORTANT COHESION. HE DID ANTICIPATE ANY CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT. GUTIERREZ MELLADO SAID HE HAD NOT YET ATTENDED A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING BUT HE HAD EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT THERE WAS UNINIMITY WITH REGARD TO THE PROGRAM. AT THE SAME TIME, GUTIERREZ MELLADO ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF SERIOUS PREOCCUPATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD AND THAT THE ROAD AHEAD WAS NOT A SMOOTH ONE BY ANY MEANS.

6. FINALLY, GUTIERREZ MELLADO SAID HE WAS AT MY DISPOSAL ANYTIME THAT I WISHED TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST AS WELL AS HOW HE VIEWED THE INTERNAL SITUATION. HE EXPRESSED GREAT FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES AND A DESIRE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH US OVER THE MONTHS AHEAD TO PUT OUR RELATIONS ON AN EVER SOUNDER FOOTING.
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